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## RESULT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH WORK, CONDUCTED IN THE ANCIENT SETTLEMENT OF KULTOBE IN 2023

It is known that the history of Keles dates back to the Stone Age. The fact that mankind has lived in this region since the Stone Age is evidenced by the sites, located on the slopes of the Kazygurt mountains. As a result of archaeological research was revealed that the ancient peoples who lived in the Keles steppe were engaged in agriculture, as well as nomadic cattle breeding, even built cities and formed the first urban culture in the region. In the Middle Ages, the Keles plain became an important center of the Great Silk Road, which connected the settlements of Sairam and Shymkent with the city of Shash and from the city of Shash with the cities of Baiyrkum, Sutkent, Otyrar and Yassy. Thus, the trade and art, agriculture and animal husbandry of the settlements of the Keles plain developed simultaneously and became the basis for the formation of urban culture. *Purpose:* In the article, we set ourselves the task to study, analyze and enter into scientific circulation the topographic structure of the town of Kultobe, the architectural features of residential buildings and the defense system, which are still not fully studied. *Scientific novelty:* on a scientific basis, the topographic structure of the town of Kultobe and the features of development were analyzed, similarities and differences with monuments of the said type in neighboring regions were discussed, and scientific conclusions were made. *Research method:* using modern technologies and research methods, the topographic structure of the town has been studied using computer programs ArcGis, AutoCad and ArcMap, aerial and ground-based satellite imagery, as well as GIS technologies. In addition, archaeometric analyses were carried out in the course of the studies to determine the composition of clay vessels and the technology of their manufacture, as well as C14 (radiocarbon) analysis based on natural science research methods. *Results:* The topographic structure and fortification of the town of Kultobe were similar to the ancient cities of the Tashkent oasis. During the excavations, it was established that the upper building layer belongs to the 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> cc, and the lower construction layer – to the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> cc.

**Key words:** Syrdarya, Keles, Kultobe, the town, stratigraphy, topography, fortification.

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### Ежелгі Күлтөбе қалашығында 2023 жылы жүргізілген археологиялық зерттеу жұмыстарының нәтижелері

Келес өңірінің тарихы сонау тас дәуірінен бастау алатындығы белгілі. Қазығұрт тау бөктерінде орналасқан тұрақтар өңірде адамзат баласының сонау тас дәуірінен бері өмір сүріп келе жатқандығының куәсі болуда. Археологиялық зерттеу жұмыстардың нәтижесінде Келес даласында мекендеген ежелгі халықтар көшпелі мал шаруашылығымен қатар егін шаруашылығымен де айналысқандығы, тіпті қалалар тұрғызылып, өңірдегі алғашқы қалалық мәдениетті қалыптастырғандығы анықталуда. Келес даласы орта ғасырларда Сайрам және Шымкент қалаларын Шаш қаласымен, Шаш қаласынан Байырқұм, Сүткент, Отырар және Яссы қалаларымен байланыстырып тұрған Ұлы Жібек жолының маңызды орталықтарына айналды. Осылайша Келес даласындағы қалашықтардың саудасы мен өнері, егіншілігі мен мал шаруашылығы қатар дамып, қалалық мәдениеттің қалыптасуына негіз болды. *Мақсаты:* Мақалада осы күнге дейін толық зерттелмеген Күлтөбе қалашығының топографиялық құрылымын, құрлыс қабаттары бойынша тұрғын үйлердің архитектуралық ерекшеліктерін және қорғаныс жүйесін зерттеп, талдап, ғылыми айналымға енгізуді мақсат еттік. *Ғылыми жаңалығы:* Күлтөбе қалашығының топографиялық құрлымы мен құрлыс қабаттарының ерекшеліктері ғылыми негізде талданып, көршілес аймақтардағы аталмыш үлгідегі ескерткіштермен ұқсастығы мен айырмашылығы талқыланып, ғылыми тұжырымдар жасалынды. *Зерттеу әдісі:* Заманауи технологиялар мен

зерттеу әдістерін қолдана отырып ArcGis, AutoCad және ArcMap компьютерлік бағдарламаларды, аэрофотосуреттер мен жер бетін спутниктік түсірілімдерді және ГАЗ технологияларын пайдалана отырып қалашықтың топографиялық құрлымы зерттелді. Сонымен қатар, зерттеу жұмыстары барысында жаратылыстану ғылым саласының зерттеу әдістері негізінде С14 (радиокөміртекті) анализімен қатар, саз ыдыстардың құрамын және жасалу технологиясын анықтау мақсатында археометриялық анализдер жасалынды. *Нәтижелер:* Күлтөбе қалашығының топографиялық құрлымы, фортификациясы Ташкен оазисіндегі ежелгі қалашықтармен ұқсастығы белгілі болды. Қазба жұмыстары барысында анықталған жоғарғы құрлыс қабатының VIII-IX ғғ тиесілі екендігі, ал төменгі құрлыс қабатының II-III ғғ жататындығы белгілі болды.

**Түйін сөздер:** Сырдария, Келес, Күлтөбе, қалашық, стратиграфия, топография, фортификация.

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### Результаты археологических исследований на городище Культобе в 2023 году

Известно, что история Келесского региона восходит к далекому каменному веку. Стоянки каменного века, расположенные в предгорьях Казыгурта, свидетельствуют о том, что обживать регион люди стали еще с древнейших времен. Результаты археологических исследований показали, древние народы, населявшие регион занимались как кочевым скотоводством, так и земледелием, даже строили города и участвовали в сложении в регионе городской культуры. Келесская степь стала важным центром Великого Шелкового пути, который в средние века соединял города Сайрам и Шымкент с городом Шаш, и далее с городами Байыркүм, Суткент, Отрар и Яссы. Таким образом, в Келесских степях параллельно развивались торговля и искусство, сельское хозяйство и животноводство, это способствовало формированию городской культуры. *Цель:* В статье мы поставили перед собой задачу изучить, проанализировать и ввести в научный оборот топографическое строение города Культобе, архитектурные особенности жилых домов и оборонной системы, которые до сих пор не изучены до конца. *Научная новизна:* на научной основе проанализировано топографическое строение города Культобе и особенности застройки, обсуждены сходства и различия с памятниками указанного типа в соседних регионах, а также сделаны научные выводы. *Метод исследования:* с использованием современных технологий и методов исследования изучена топографическая структура города с использованием компьютерных программ ArcGis, AutoCad и ArcMap, аэрофотоснимков и спутниковых снимков земной поверхности, а также ГИС-технологий. Кроме того, в ходе исследований были проведены археометрические анализы для определения состава глиняных сосудов и технологии их изготовления, а также С14 (радиоуглеродный) анализ на основе методов исследования области естественных наук. *Результаты:* Топографическое строение и фортификация города Культобе были аналогичны древним городам Ташкентского оазиса. В ходе раскопок было установлено, что верхний строительный слой относится к VIII-IX векам, а нижний строительный слой – ко II-III векам.

**Ключевые слова:** Сырдарья, Келес, Культобе, городище, стратиграфия, топография, фортификация.

## Introduction

The settlement of Kultobe is located in the middle reaches of the Syrdarya River, at the confluence of the Keles River with the Syrdarya River (2 km southwest of the village of G. Muratbayev, Keles district, Turkestan region). Geographical coordinates of the settlement of Kultobe: N 4540702.838, E 467896.822, altitude above sea level – 234,000 m. The total area of the settlement is 8.5 hectares. If we look at the historical topography of the sites of the region, there are ancient sites of Karatobe, Kaunshytepe, Zhuantobe, Aktepe, Shash, etc. in

the east and south of the city, the sites of Utirtobe, Aktobe, Shaushykumtobe, Shardara, Suskent, Baiyrkum and others are located in the north and west. Due to the Kurkeles, Keles, Shyrshik and Angren rivers flowing into the Syrdarya River, this region is one of the regions of Central Asia suitable for semi-nomadic cattle breeding and agriculture, abundant water resources and comfortable for human life. According to the cities and large settlements located along the above-mentioned rivers, it can be understood that the Keles district was a natural border between the peoples engaged in nomadic animal husbandry and in sedentary agricul-

ture. This is due to the fact that the Syrdarya valley, rich in deep rivers, was concentrated in the south of the Keles district, where sedentary peoples whose economy was based on agriculture were concentrated and in the north of the Keles district, in the area of the city, peoples whose main occupation was animal husbandry, lived in the steppe with hollows and mountain ranges.

According to the ancient history of Keles, it is known that the earliest traces of life in the region belong to the ancient Stone Age, when hunters and gatherers lived in caves on the banks of Mountain Rivers and springs (Taleev, 1995: 7). In 1973-1974, during the research conducted by the South Kazakhstan archaeological expedition led by Kh.A. Alpysbayev, the Early Stone epoch and Middle Stone Age settlements such as Zhalpakso I, II, III, Susingen, Zhalgyzarsha I, II, III originating from the river Keles and located on the slopes of the Karzhantau, Ogem, Kosmola, Kazygurt ridges, were discovered (Alpysbaev, 1978: 120-125; Taymagambetov, 1990: 18-21). These places are evidence of the existence of people in this region since the Stone Age. Due to the incomplete study of the Keles region, the data on Bronze Age sites of the region are practically absent. In the Early Iron Age, Central Asia was inhabited by the Saka tribes who formed a nomadic culture. In the ancient Achaemenid records, these tribes were divided into three groups: Saka – Tigrahaudas, Saka – Haumavargas, Saka – Paradarayas. A number of scientists who conducted research on the Saka tribes put forward the opinion that the Saka Tigrahauda inhabited the southern territories of Shasha, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan (Akishev, 1963: 16-17). Based on these data, it can be concluded that the Saka Tigrahauda lived in the Keles area during the Early Iron Age. In his works A.Kh. Margulan mentioned the possibility of belonging of such ancient settlements as Zhartytobe and Karatobe along the Keles River to the Saka tribes (Margulan, 1950: 16-17). In our opinion, the sites of these tribes may be settlements, cities and burials, which were found in large numbers in river basins with abundant water. This opinion is also confirmed by the burials identified at the Zhaman-Togay burial ground under the Shardara reservoir (Maksimova et. al., 1968: 174-192). E.I. Ageeva and G.I. Patsevich who has been conducting research on the site of the Shardara reservoir in the Keles district for many years, gave a satisfactory opinion that the Saka tribes, living in the region, were engaged in semi-nomadic animal husbandry and agriculture, even built cities and formed the first urban culture in the region (Ageeva, Pacevich, 1958: 8).

One of the ancient tribes living in this region Kanly (2 c. BC - 6<sup>th</sup> c. AD) in the south from the region, in the north to the Aral Sea and in the east from the slopes of Karatau to the Talas River, they ruled at the state level and formed the Kanly culture (Bichurin, 1950: 149-151; Baypakov, Taymagambetov, 2009: 160-163; Zholdasbayuly, 1995: 42; Mynzhan, 1994: 91; Taleev, 1993: 34-36). The scientists such as G.V. Grigoriev, S.P. Tolstov, A.N. Bernstam, L.M. Levina who studied the Kanly culture for many years, divided the Kanly culture into three groups depending on regional characteristics. These cultures were called with the names of the sites such as Kauynshy, Otyrar-Karatau and Zhetysar cultures where the first large-scale studies were conducted (Ageeva, Pacevich, 1958: 9-60; Levina, 1971: 193-224; Baypakov, Taymagambetov, 2009: 208-230).

The territory of the Kauynshy culture of the Kanly people includes the middle course of the Syrdarya, the valleys of the Kurkeles, Keles, Shyrshyk and Angren rivers, that is, the Tashkent oasis. In 1934-1938, as a result of many years of research by the Yangiyul archaeological expedition under the leadership of Grigoriyev, the sites of the Kanly culture in the Tashkent oasis were studied at a high level and it was given the name of the Kaunshytobe site – “Kaunshy culture”, where the first studies were conducted (Levina, 1971: 90-91; Baypakov, Taymagambetov, 2009: 220).

It can be seen that the sites in the valleys of the Kurkeles and Keles rivers in the Kanly tribal areas have been hastily and less studied. For this reason, since 2017, the scientists from the Kozha Akhmet Yasavi International Kazakh-Turkish University, the Research Institute of Archaeology, the Kazakh National University named after Al-Farabi and the Shymkent Pedagogical University have been conducting research in the settlement of Kultobe and the Myntobe burial ground, located in the lower reaches of the Keles River (Zhetibaev et. al., 2020: 409-419; Taleev т.б., 2019: 48-62; Eleuov et. al., 2020: 195-200; Podushkin, Donec, 2018: 99-104; Podushkin, 2019: 153-167; Sizdikov et. al., 2023: 192-201). As a result of archaeological research conducted to this day, a large number of relics belonging to the Kanly tribes have been discovered (Fig.1-2) (Sizdikov et. al., 2022: 235-246; Gursoy et. al., 2023: 225-243; Gursoy et. al., 2023: 144-162). In the upper construction layer of the settlement of Kultobe, many parts of clay vessels, dating back to the end of the Kanly period, were found and in the lower layers – the fragments of clay vessels dating back

to the early period. In the article, we considered advisable to study, analyze and introduce into scientific circulation the topographic structure of the

settlement of Kultobe, the architectural features of residential buildings and the defence system, which has not been fully studied.

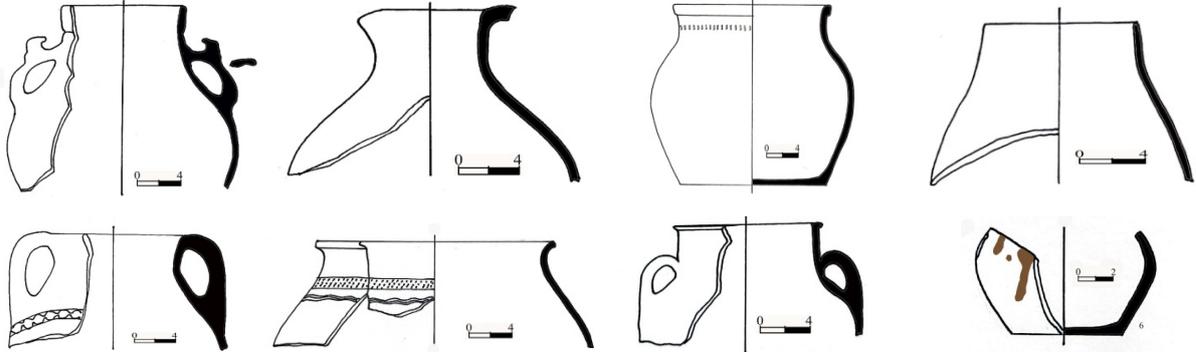


Figure 1 – Jars found in Kultobe town

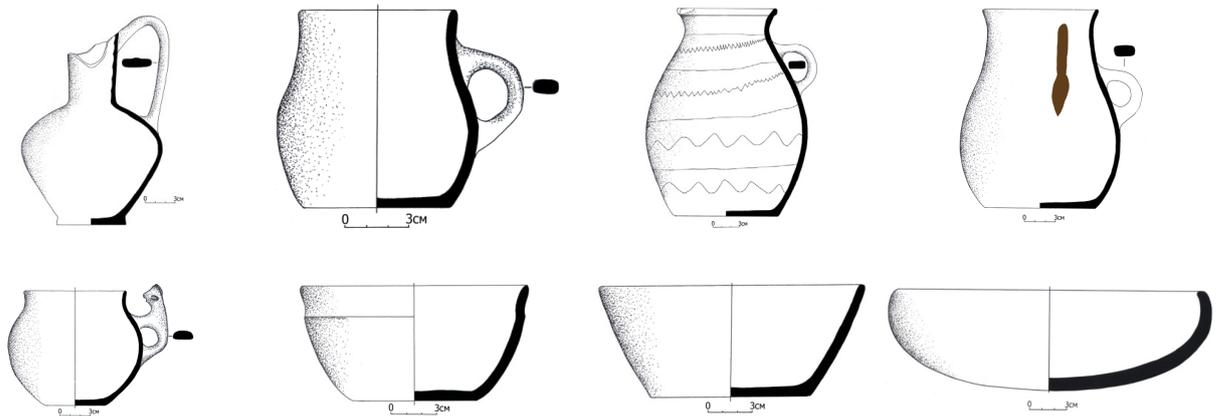


Figure 2 – Jars found in Myntobe cemetery

### Materials and methods

When writing the article, along with archaeological data, the works of local historians and travellers who studied the region, were widely used. Based on the works of local historians and travellers, information about the ancient history and toponymy of the region was obtained, as well as important information about the topographic structure, construction layers and chronology of the settlement, the material culture of the inhabitants of the settlement were collected on the base of archaeological data. In addition, during the research, archaeometric analyses were carried out to determine the composition of clay vessels and their manufacturing technology, as well as C14 (radiocarbon) analysis based on re-

search methods in the field of natural sciences. In order to determine the economy of the ancient inhabitants of the region, the archaeological and paleozoological studies of osteological materials, found during excavations, are carried out. Using modern technologies and research methods, the topographic structure of the settlement was studied using the programs ArcGIS, AutoCAD and computer programs ArcMap, aerial photographs and satellite images of the earth's surface and GIS technologies.

### Results

The site is located on the right bank of the Syrdarya River, at the confluence of the Keles River with the Syrdarya River. As for the topographic

structure of the ancient settlement of Kultobe, the archaeological site is located on a high terrace to the east of the water zone (Fig.3). The settlement is clearly visible from the relief of the earth. The settlement consists of parts of the citadel, Shahrستان and Rabad, as well as early medieval towns (Fig.4). The citadel and Shahrستان are connected to each other by high fortress walls surrounding the settlement. In the southwestern part of the square-shaped Shahrستان, surrounded by a high fortress wall, there is a citadel surrounded by a high square fortress wall. There were the only gates to Shahrستان and the citadel of the city. The gates are oriented to the north. Analyzing the work of scientists studying the fortification of early medieval towns, it became clear that the gates of early medieval towns are oriented to the north. This opinion is based on the gates which are oriented to the North of the settlements of ancient Khanabad in the Tashkent

oasis, Kalatepa (Iskitepa), Seviltepa (Munchaktepa), Pushti Mahmud, Aktepa, Kyrkjangitepa, etc. (Buryakov, 1982: 12-41). Currently, the Rabad part of the town has not been preserved due to the fact that the suburb of the town has turned into arable land. The Shahrستان of the settlement has been preserved as a high square-shaped hill with rounded corners. Most of the ancient settlements located in the Tashkent oasis and the valley of the Keles River, have a square or oval shape, which makes the ancient settlements similar to each other in topographical structure. The total length of the fortress wall surrounding the Shahrستان part of the settlement is 310 m in the East-West direction and 220 m in the South-North direction. The surface of Shahrستان is flat; there are no traces of street or construction sites on the topography. The depth of the cultural layer is unknown due to the lack of excavations in the Shahrستان part of the city.



**Figure 3** – Aerial view of Kultobe town

If we look at the topography of the city, we can see that a high round hill adjoins the eastern part of the fortress wall of Shahrستان. As for the topographic structure of the specified hill, the hill has a round shape, the surface is flat, surrounded by high walls. The northwestern part of the hill protrudes slightly

forward. The total diameter of the roof is 55 m. If we take the topography of the mentioned hill as a basis, it is known that there is a large-scale structure under the mound. In our opinion, there could be a temple or a public building under the roof of the early period that served the townspeople. This

opinion is confirmed by the temple opened under a round hill, located in the Rabad part in the city of Kuva of the Ferghana region (Mirzaahmedov et. al., 2008: 189-209). What kind of structure is under the roof will be determined during future archaeological excavations.

According to the topographic structure of the city citadel, it becomes clear that the citadel consists of two parts. The citadel of the city has been preserved in the form of a square high hill with rounded corners. That is, the eastern and northern parts of the citadel are surrounded by a high fortress with vertical walls, the southern part adjoins the river and the western part is slightly steep. The total length of the fortress wall surrounding the citadel part of the city is 120 m in the east-west direction and 100 m in the south-north direction. The entrance to the citadel was through one gate. The citadel gate is located in the middle of the north wall facing north. The top of the fortress with vertical walls surrounding the citadel is flat and there are no traces of streets or buildings in its topography. There is a high round hill in the central part of the citadel. The northwestern part of the hill protrudes slightly forward. The total diameter of the roof is 40 m. If we take the topography of the mentioned hill as a basis, it is known that there is a large-scale structure under the mound.

In our opinion, the palace of the city ruler or a public building (temple) serving the urban population could be located under the roof in the central part of the citadel. In 2017, the Turan archaeological expedition led by Doctor of Medical Sciences, Professor M. Eleuov, conducted archaeological excavations on a round hill, located in the central part of the citadel. During the research work, whole ruins of adobe structures were discovered at the excavation site. During the cleaning work, it became known that the ruins of adobe structures continue from the reference point to a depth of 1-1.3 m. At a depth of 1.3-1.4 m from the reference point, the ruins of a very poorly preserved thick wall were revealed. Due to the poor preservation of the wall, it was not possible to determine the design of any building. During the cleaning work, it was found that the dimensions of the ruins of adobe structures are 22x50x10 cm, 21x48x9.5 cm. According to the head of the expedition, Ph.D., Professor M. Yeleuov, the sizes of the discovered adobe structures correspond to the sizes of adobe structures, found in the buildings of the Kanly period, discovered during the excavations of the Shardara archaeological expedition in the settlements of Aktobe and Shaushykkumtobe (Eleuov et. al., 2020: 195-199).

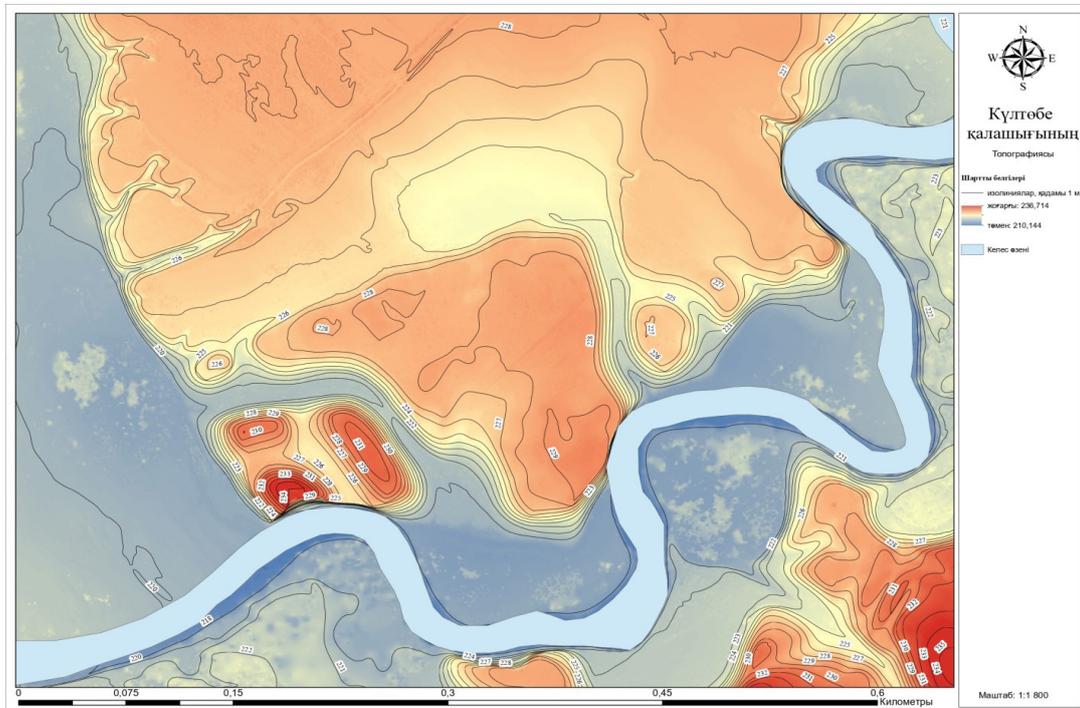


Figure 4 – Topographical structure of Kultobe town

In the course of excavations at a depth of 1.4 m from the reference point, a second construction layer was discovered, which was poorly preserved. A long lobby, two living rooms and courtyard oriented from southeast to northwest belonging to the aforementioned construction layer were opened. During the cleaning work, the hearths and fireplaces were identified as the interiors of living rooms. It was found that ceramics with sizes 22x50x10 cm, 21x48x9.5 cm were used in the dwelling construction (Eleuov et. al., 2020: 195-199). Clay vessels, found during excavations, are similar clay vessels, discovered in the settlements of Aktobe I, Aktobe II, Shaushykumtobe and Kauyinshytobe, Alimbaytobe, etc. in the Tashkent oasis.

### Discussion

In 2023, a stratigraphic excavation was made in the eastern part of the citadel in the north-east, south-west direction of the settlement of Kultobe. Stratigraphic excavations were carried out to determine the structural layers of the citadel part of the settlement, its age, periods of formation, development and decline of the city, defence system, plan of residential complexes, economy and lifestyle of the settlement, ancient inhabitants, features of the construction and functioning of the settlement. The excavation site was conditionally designated as excavation No.1. The construction objects belonging to 6 construction layers in the area of the stratigraphic excavation is 17x8 m extending from the reference

point to a depth of 7.5 m, have been identified (Fig. 5). Valuable data on the architectural features of the construction objects of each construction layer, defence system, chronology of the construction layers and production of ceramics have been obtained.

During the excavations, a living room belonging to the first construction layer was discovered at a depth of 0.5 m from the reference point. The room size is 6x4.2 m, the wall width is 1.2 m and the remaining height is 0.3 m. It turned out that the walls were built of clay measuring 40x26x11 cm. The hearth made of river stone was found along the northern wall of the room and a garbage pit was found in the southwestern corner. The living room is designed based on early medieval residential architecture. The traces of a massive fire were found in the northwestern part of the excavation. At the same time, in the course of our research work, it became known that at later stages the site of the city, preserved in the form of a high hill, became the burial of residents who lived there. This is due to the fact that during excavations at a depth of 0.7-1 m from the reference point, several burials were discovered. The skeletons were laid anatomically – lying on their backs, the head was directed to the northwest, the face was turned upwards or to the southwest, two arms and two legs were positioned vertically, their length are 1.1-1.65 m. During the excavations of the mentioned graves, it became known that the building objects belonging to the first construction layer were damaged.



Figure 5 – Aerial view of the excavation site

During the research work, a living room belonging to the second construction layer was identified at a depth of 1.25 m from the reference point. A total area of the living room is 6.5 x 5.1 m. The western and northern walls of the room are connected to the walls of the upper construction layers. During the excavations, a living room belonging to the third construction layer was identified at the depth of 2.15 m from reference point. The room is located in the south-east north-west direction. The defined total area of the living room is 5.25 x 3.75 m. The entrance to the room is oriented to the southeast; there is “II” shaped sufa inside. In the course of the cleaning work, it became known that the surface of sufa was smeared with clay mixed with grass. As we saw above, the western wall of the room is connected to the walls of the upper construction layers. 6-8 cm thick traces of fire was found on the floor of the room. 3 rooms of an apartment building belonging to the fourth

construction layer at a depth of 2.65 m from the landmark were identified and studied. The rooms are arranged longitudinally from southwest to northeast. When cleaning the floor of the room, a part of a clay vessel with a zoomorphic handle was identified. It is known that this vessel was used for ritual purposes. These vessel samples were widely used by the Kanly tribes in 1<sup>st</sup> c. BC. – 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD (Sizdikov et. al., 2022: 235-246). At the depth of 3.6 m from the reference point, the fortress wall of the settlement of the fifth construction layer and two living rooms of the inner part of the fortress wall were revealed. At the depth of 4.9 m from the reference point, two rooms of dwelling belonging to the sixth construction layer, built close to the fortress wall and the fortress wall, were identified. When cleaning the floors of residential premises, a part of a bowl with a zoomorphic handle, figure with a ram’s head and a large number of handmade ceramic products were found (Fig. 6).



**Figure 5** – Aerial view of the stratigraphic excavation

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be noted that the earliest traces of life in the Keles area date back to the ancient Stone Age, hunters and gatherers lived in caves on the banks of Mountain Rivers and streams, the settlement of the Saka-Tigrahauds, who are consid-

ered a branch of the Sakas tribes that formed a nomadic culture in Central Asia in the Early Iron Age and their semi-nomadic cattle breeding along with agriculture. It is established that they were engaged in agriculture and even formed the first urban culture in the region and built high fortified cities. The topographical structure of the settlement of Kultobe,

considered one of the ancient settlements of the region, has been studied and it has been established that the city consists of citadel, Shahristan and Rabad parts. The fortification of the settlement of Kultobe, surrounded by a high fortress wall around the citadel and shakhristan, was known for its similarity to the ancient settlements of the Tashkent oasis.

Analyzing the physical data obtained during the excavations, it was found that the upper construction layer dates back to the 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> cc. That is, it became known that during the Arab invasion of Central Asia in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the city was invaded, as a result of which the source of life in the city was ceased. This conclusion is confirmed by the traces of fire, found on the floor of the first construction layer. According to the material data obtained, including the fragments of clay vessels, it was found that the lower

sixth construction layer was built in the 1<sup>st</sup> c. BC. It has been established that it coincides with the first centuries, that is, with the Kanly period. In our opinion, the population of the settlement lived peacefully in the 2<sup>nd</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> centuries, i.e. during the period of peace and prosperity of the Kanly period, whereas in the 7<sup>th</sup> -9<sup>th</sup> centuries it was going through a period of decline due to invasions the Arabs and others. This opinion is evidenced by the architectural structure of the construction layers, the found artifacts and the identified traces of fires.

*The article was prepared on the basis of the scientific project AP19678134 «Carrying out archaeological and interdisciplinary research on the ancient settlement of Kultobe located in the Keles region».*

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*Поступила: 19.02.2024*

*Принята: 30.05.2024*